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My Wife's Relations

A Story of Pigland



London

J. S. Virtue & Company, Limited, 26, Ivy Lane



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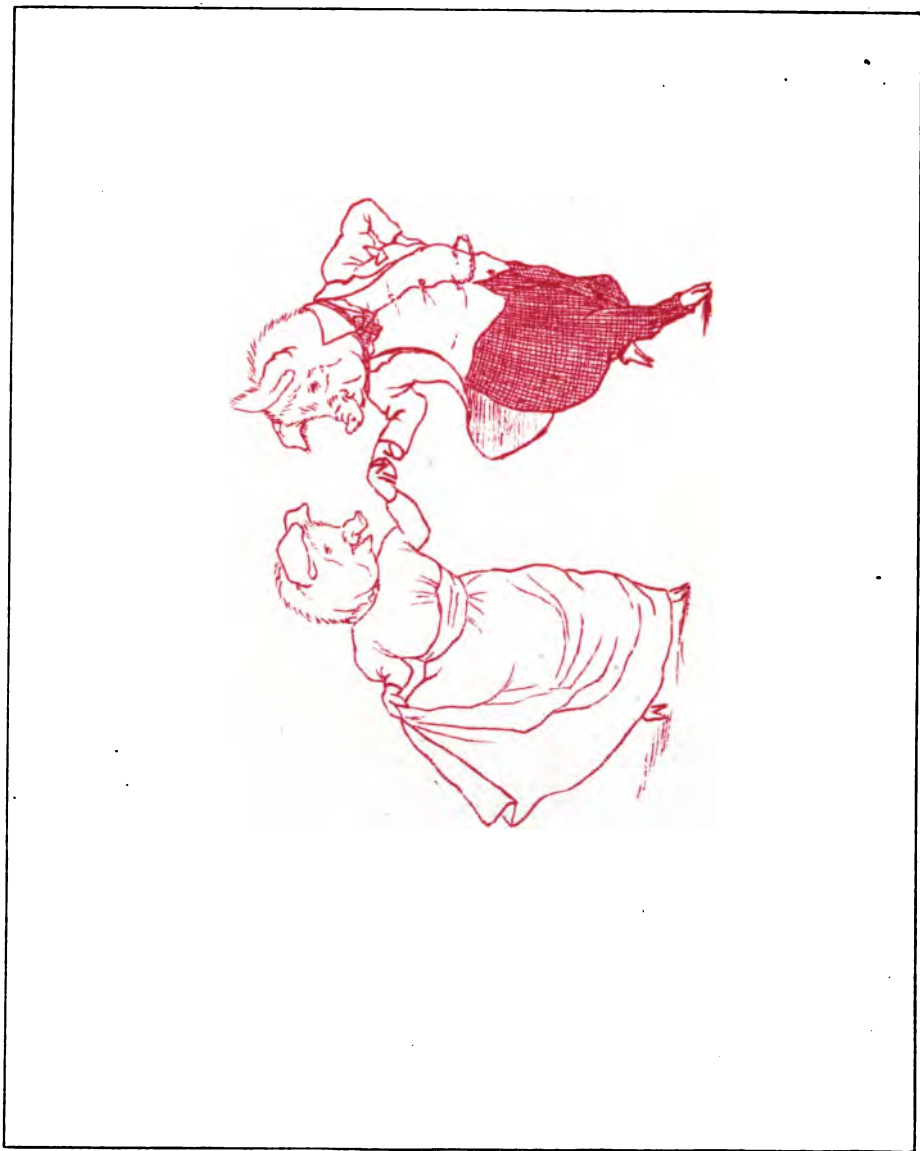


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MY WIFE'S RELATIONS

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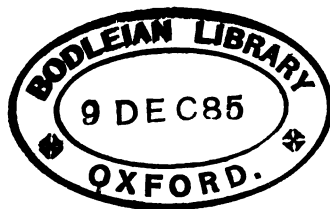
BY H. A. H.

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MY WIFE'S RELATIONS.

A STORY OF PIGLAND.



“THE country is very dull,” said Mrs. Trotter to her husband, Grumphry Trotter; “all our nicest neighbours have left for London, and why should we not go there too? You have a nice little property in turnip-fields. Our children have grown up, and gone to seek their fortunes. Surely we might enjoy ourselves and see some of the wonderful sights of the great city, of which our friend Mr. Ringnose told

us such strange stories. Perhaps, too, we might find our cousins the Von Grunters."

"Well, Dinah, I don't mind if I have a change of scene. I should like to go to the play and to the Tower, but most of all to the Zoological Gardens. They say, though I can hardly believe it, that there is an enormous creature, just like me, Dinah, only handsomer."

"I don't think he can be handsomer than you, Grumph, though he may be bigger."

"Any way pack up, Dinah, and mind and take a supply of fresh turnips for the winter, for I am told there are no fields or market gardens in London, they only plant houses."

"But they have a good market, where we can get fruits and vegetables sent up from

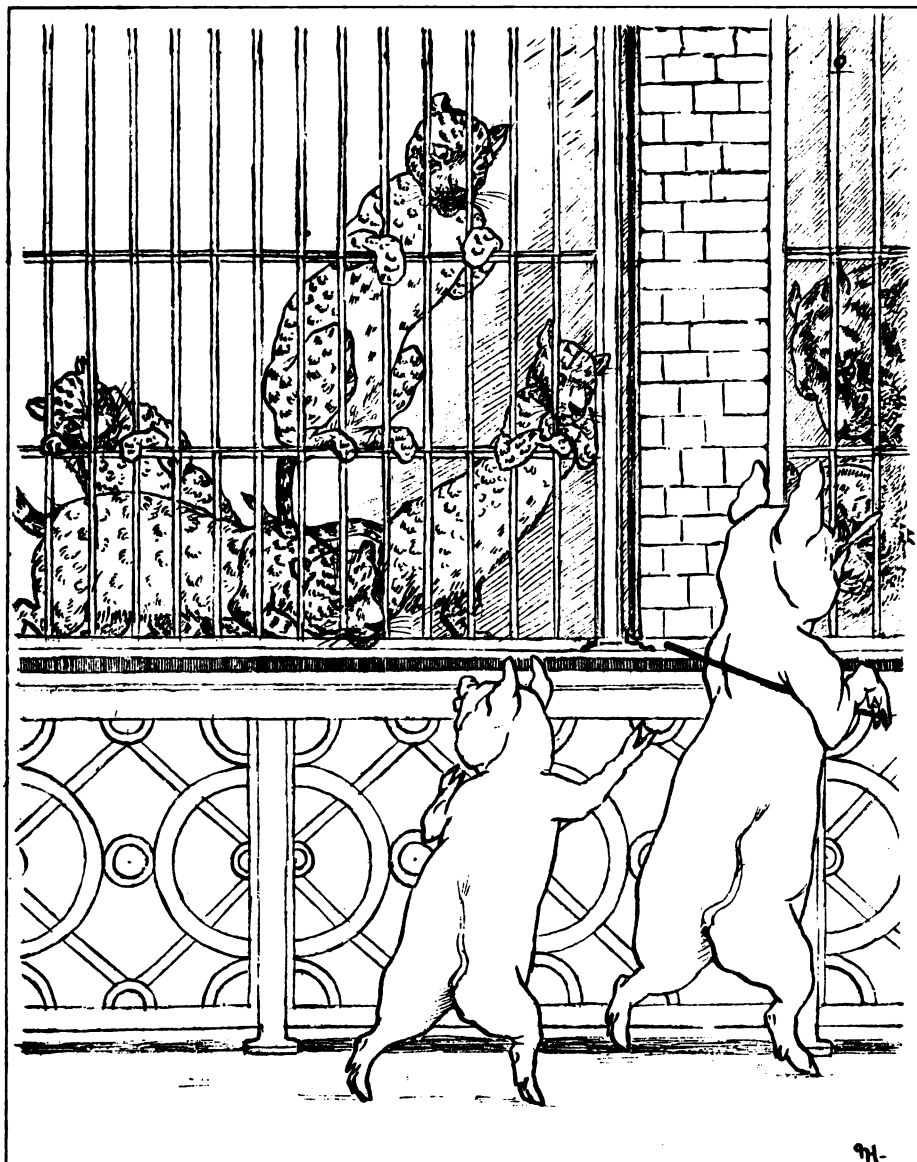
the country," said Dinah, proud to display her superior knowledge.

"First," said the prudent Mrs. Trotter, "I will look over the *Times*, and see if there is a house to suit us."

She ran her cunning little eyes all down the list of houses to let, and at last selected three—one not far from Covent Garden, because it would be convenient for marketing; another near Rotten Row, because she thought it was a nice soft place for them to walk in; and a third at Campden Hill, because there was a garden attached to it. Finally they decided on the latter, and wrote to say they would take it, and be up in a few days.

When they were quite settled in their new house, and Mr. Trotter had been to a tailor's

and Mrs. Trotter to a dressmaker's, they determined to amuse themselves, and decided upon visiting the Zoological Gardens. Mr. Trotter felt that this was quite an event for him, so he put on his new coat which he had had made quite after his own idea of what became a country gentleman, whilst Mrs. Trotter looked quite girlish in a short muslin dress tied at the waist with a sash, a lace frill at the neck, and a small bonnet set just atop of her head, the strings fastened well behind her ears that they might not be hidden. The Trotters and their relations had always prided themselves upon their peculiar family features—large ears, small eyes, and long noses—and said they had been the distinguishing points of their noble race ever since



The Animals in the Lion House indignant at the Brothers' Release. p. 5

the time when their ancestors roamed in savage hordes among the British beech-woods.

Mr. and Mrs. Trotter walked to the Zoo and paid their two shillings at the gate. Mrs. Trotter managed to get through the turnstile, but Mr. Trotter being of a larger build was obliged to have the large gates opened for him to pass through, which made him feel highly important. Mrs. Trotter took his arm, and they proceeded down the broad walk, descended the steps, and went into the lion house.

“Never in my life have I seen such enormous cats,” said Mr. Trotter. “They must be Persian. The hair grows curiously long upon the head and breast of several,

and some are striped and some are spotted ; and here comes the cat's-meat man with a barrow full of meat and bones."

"Good gracious !" said Mrs. Trotter, "how they roar. The sound is more like that of Mr. Barber's bull than a cat's. How big the mice and rats must be which they catch in their native woods. Perhaps we shall see some in the other cages."

The crowd was great. Mr. and Mrs. Trotter pushed their way through it, and went out of the door opposite the bison, then turned round and came to where the seals were being fed and were showing how cleverly they could sit upon chairs and catch fish that was thrown to them.

Whilst the Trotters were looking on in

astonishment at this performance, one of the seals rolled backwards into the water, and with a heavy splash sent the water over Mrs. Trotter's white muslin. In great distress and vexation she drew Mr. Trotter away down a side walk, saying, "What shall I do if I should meet any of my friends, and my dress so wet and limp?"

"Never mind," said Mr. Trotter, "the sun will soon dry your dress, and you will be quite nice and crisp should we meet your cousins the Von Grunters, who doubtless often frequent this fashionable resort. Being of a noble race, it follows they mix in the best society, and I am proud to call your cousins mine, Dinah."

"Ah," said Dinah, "my aunt used to tell

Grunter of Thatchwick, cousins of the Hoofers?"

"Why, we are the very persons," responded the fine-looking youth thus addressed, whose peculiar shaped tusks and general air bespoke his Teutonic, not to say Bohemian, origin. "I am Timothy and this is Tobias." Hereupon Timothy nudged Tobias and whispered, "Don't you contradict me."

"Then you are in truth my wife's relations. She was a Miss Hooper. Let us introduce ourselves. Mr. and Mrs. Trotter. And may I ask how it came to pass that you are captives here?"

"Because of our exceptional beauty, Mr. Trotter."

“Ex—cep—tional beauty,” gasped the latter.

“Just so,” said Timothy, “and this is how we came to get here. One day we were in Orley beech-wood, wandering and hunting for beech-nuts, when two men passed by, and seeing us, one of them said to the other, ‘We’ve nothing like that in the Gardens.’ Had we only known what was the full meaning of those words, we should have run miles away. It was a great misfortune that having only lived in the country we did not know what was meant by ‘the Gardens.’

“A few days after we were caught, handcuffed, lifted into a cart, and afterwards into a train, and then brought on and lodged here. What a fatal gift is beauty! You

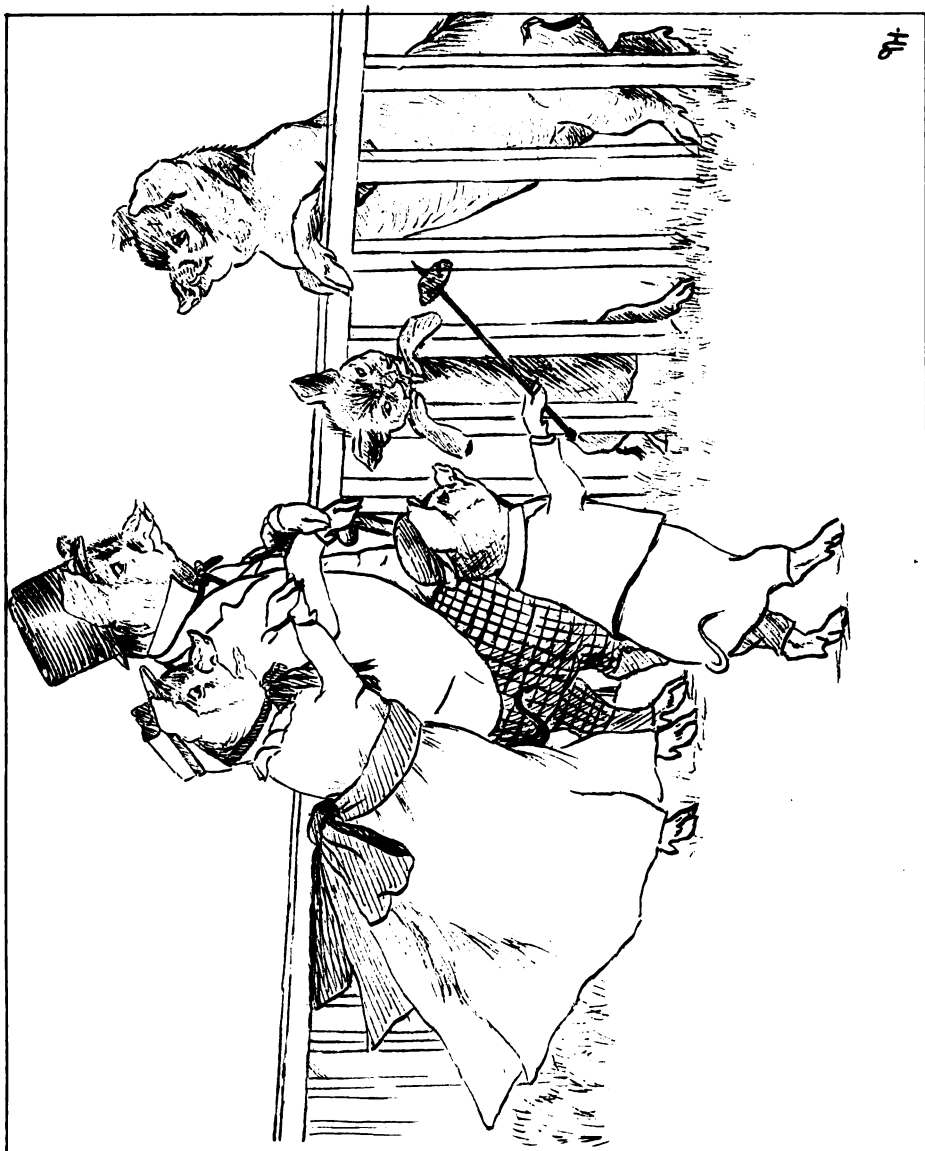
and Mrs. Trotter may be thankful that you are nothing out of the common."

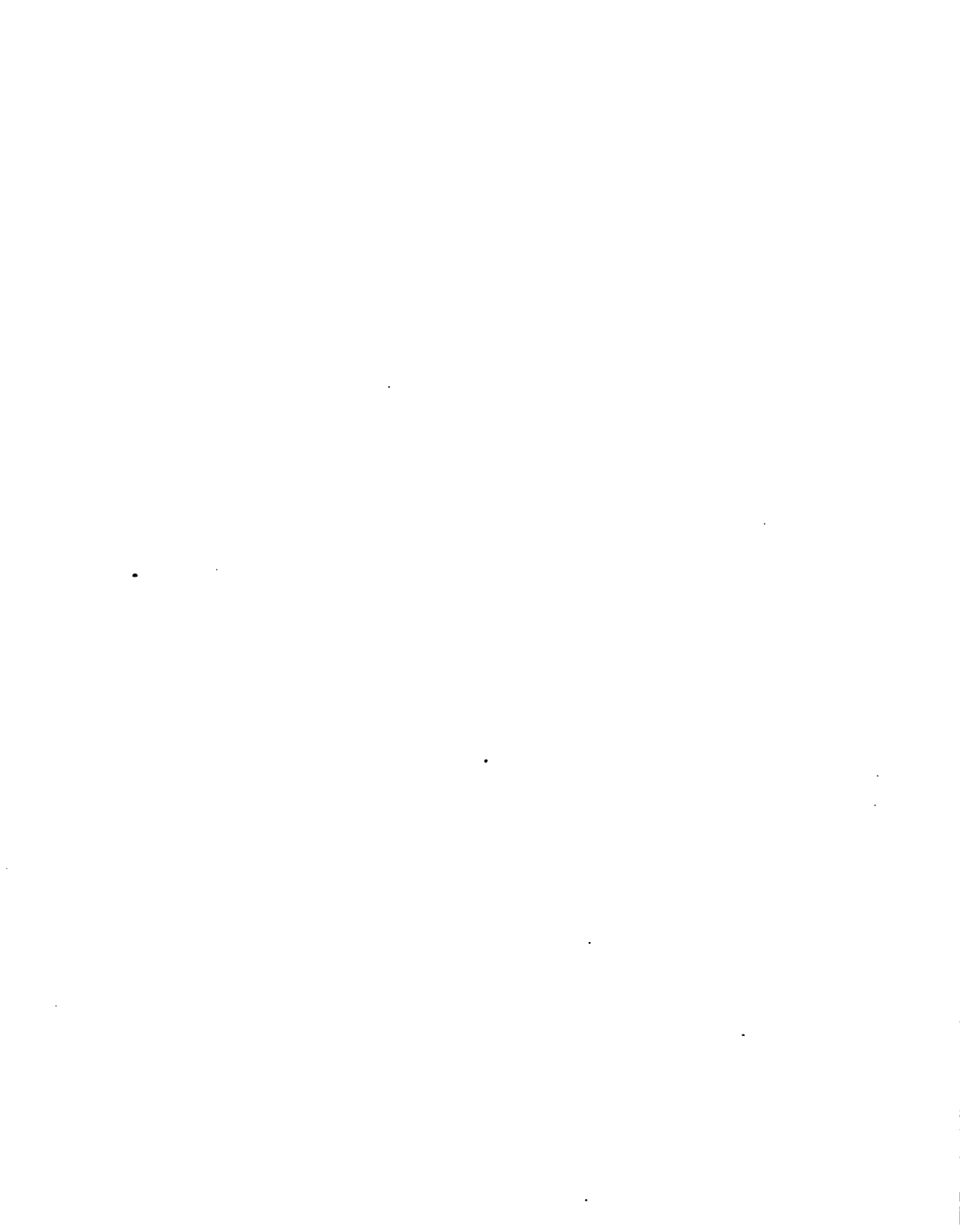
A joint sniff was the only response, a faint expression of displeasure spread like a thin cloud over the Trotters' kindly faces, but pity soon gained the mastery over their feelings.

"If," continued the sharp-witted Tobias, "you have any cousinly love, for pity's sake do your best to get us out of this sty, this den. There's nothing in the world we wouldn't do for you, we will follow you like—like—"

"Shadows," put in Timothy.

"Yes, indeed, all we ask is to be taken away from here. See how we are insulted. Look at that child holding up a bun to us on a stick—to us, the Von Grunters!"







91.

And then in a low voice to his brother, "Just recollected who we were in time, Tim."

"Say no more," said Mrs. Trotter, "you wring our hearts. Mr. Trotter will do his very utmost for you, will you not, dear Grumphry?"

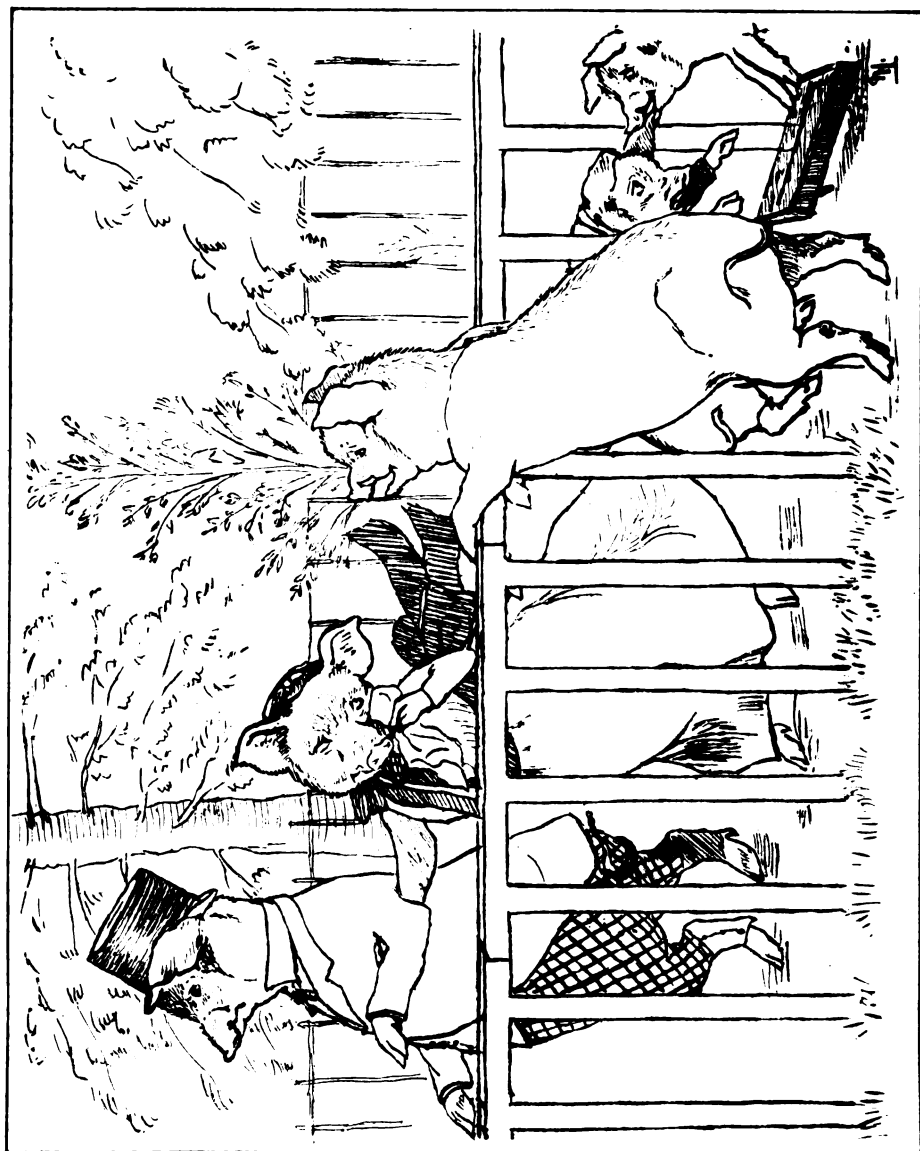
"Trust me, dear young friends, I will not rest till I obtain your release. Our home shall be yours. Keep a good heart."

Hereupon, Mrs. Trotter, whose gentle heart was greatly moved, leant over the fence and embraced her unhappy cousin, whilst Mr. Trotter stooped and said a few kind words to the younger brother.

During this proceeding, the little pig who had as Tobias said insulted him by

offering him a bun, which Timothy unseen by his brother had snatched and eaten, got his head through the fence, and began to eat up the Von Grunters' porridge. It was particularly good, and he was licking his lips when Timothy spied him, caught him by the ear, and gave him a sharp bite. The Trotters heard the cries, but set them down to the agonized feelings of Tobias at parting with them.

Now the Trotters were the simplest and kindest beings in the world. Their only thought was to please one another and to help their fellow-creatures. Surely they deserved to be happy, and yet through their very lack of common sense, and from taking any statement upon trust, they were about



to make their own lives as miserable as they well could be made. And this is the way it came about.

When Mr. and Mrs. Trotter got home, the first thing they did was to sit down and compose a letter to be sent to the Council of the Zoological Society, imploring the release of the Von Grunters. It was the first time in Mr. Trotter's life that he had ever written an official letter, and this one was not to a single person, but to many, to a Council!

He felt its importance, its gravity. Such an event might never occur again in his lifetime. It was a moment of supreme awe, for did not the liberty or bondage of Mrs. Trotter's gentle cousins hang upon the

doubt whether he, Grumphry Trotter, could touch the hearts of the noble Council ?

“ I will say the words aloud, Dinah, and then you can give your opinion as I go along. Now I begin.

“ ‘ Respected Council of Beasts.’ ”

“ That won’t do,” said Mrs. Trotter; “ can’t you see, you call them beasts.”

“ Nothing of the kind; I call them Council of Beasts, and they *are* the Council of Beasts.”

“ It won’t do, Grumphry, I feel it won’t.”

“ Well, shall I say, ‘ Respected Council of Animals’ ? ”

“ Why, that is nearly as bad ; you still call them animals.”

“ And it’s the truth, and very noble

animals, too. Why should they mind being told the truth?"

"My dear Grumphry, you are a pig; but you wouldn't quite like to be addressed as 'Noble Pig!'"

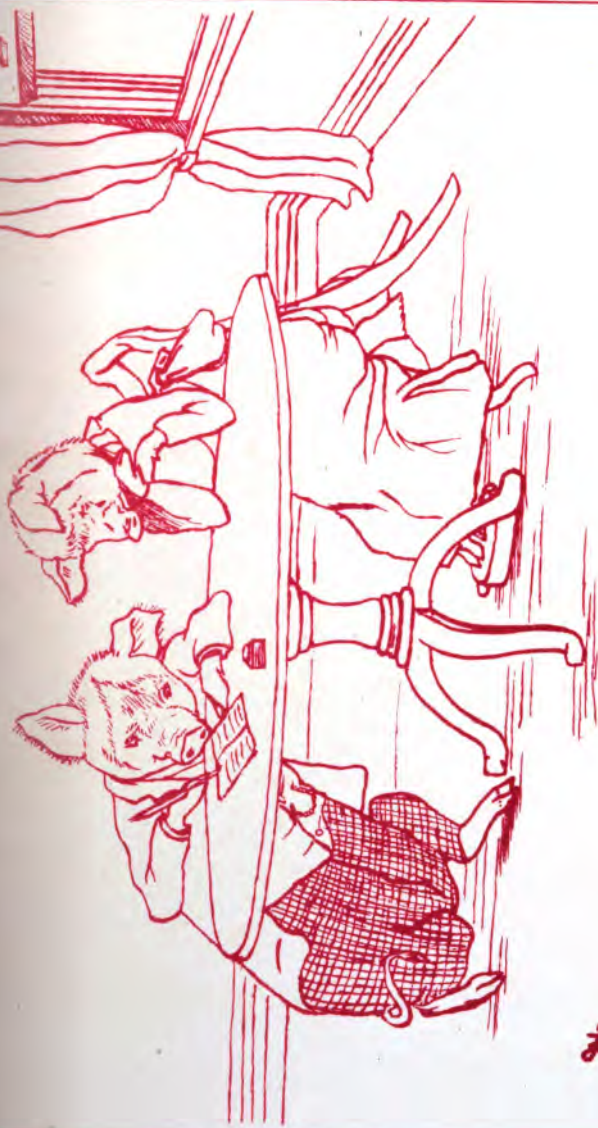
"Humph! well, there's something in that, Dinah. But how shall I begin?"

"Suppose, dear, you say, 'Honourable and respected patrons and housers of the lower forms of animal life.'"

"That's a reflection upon us and our relations."

"Oh, well, we know better; but as you're so particular, alter it to 'housers of numerous and curious creatures—of this and other worlds besides our own.'"





Mr. Trotter then read in loud and sonorous tones, "Honourable and respected patrons, and housers of numerous and curious creatures of this, and other worlds besides our own"—and continued, "I, Grumphry Trotter, being by all known to be of sane mind, do humbly beseech you for the release of my wife's two well-beloved cousins, Tobias and Timothy Von Grunter, who are now confined in your honourable Society's Gardens, on account of their extreme beauty."

"Stop, dear, you mustn't say that. They will want to keep them if you mention their beauty. Run your pen through that."

"Then shall I write, 'who are confined with or without reason?'"

"On no account," said Mrs. Trotter; "that

might mean that the Von Grunters had lost their senses ; and who would let a mad pig loose ? Say, 'who now inhabit a snug little house in your refreshing gardens.' That will be pleasant for the Council to hear, and will make them wish to read on."

"Why, Dinah, that's sweetly cunning of you ; do you know, I think you might just as well write the letter yourself, you say just what I mean to say, only somehow I can't express it."

With a clear sense of superior intelligence, but well-subdued expression of face, lest Mr. Trotter's feelings should be hurt, Mrs. Trotter took the pen from her husband, leant her head upon her hand, her elbows on the table, and musing pensively for a few

seconds, continued writing, repeating the words aloud as she wrote—"They, Tobias and Timothy Von Grunter, are pining from long confinement, and if they continue to refuse all food, as they tell me is the case, they will become a discredit to your honourable Society. But let not this alone weigh with you. I would appeal to a feeling common to us all—the love of our wife's relations ; ah ! now I touch your hearts. You, honoured gentlemen, will set free the Von Grunters, whom, on my part, I undertake to adopt and cherish as my own children. They will enliven our home, and be the solace of our declining age. And for you, our grateful hearts will pray that your cages may never be empty."

“I think,” said Mr. Trotter, “that sounds well; it runs off the tongue rollingly, and is reasonable and touching, and just everything that it should be. We shall have the Von Grunters out before a week is over, Dinah, mark my words! And now to fold and seal this letter upon which hang your dear cousins’ fate and our happiness.”

Poor Mr. Trotter! He spoke truly, but little did he then imagine in what way their happiness hung upon the release or captivity of the Von Grunters.

In a week’s time, which seemed to the expectant Trotters doubly long, there came a letter from the Secretary of the Zoological Society, saying that on consideration of the circumstances, the family ties, and other facts,

they had consented to release the Von Grunters, and to hand them over to the care of Mr. and Mrs. Trotter; if these would defray all expenses hitherto incurred on the Von Grunters' account, they would be at liberty to depart the day after.

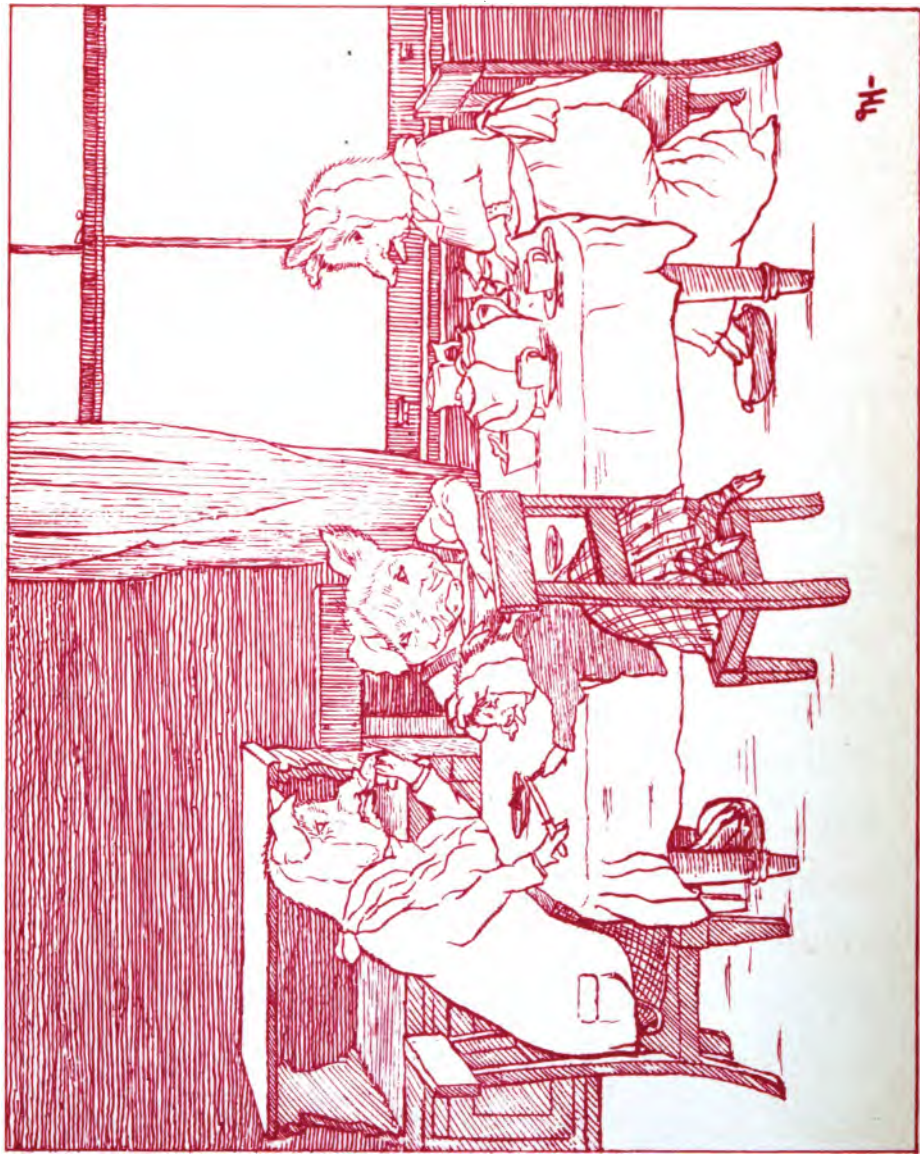
Mr. T. did not hesitate a moment, but with his large-hearted liberality at once drew out his cheque-book, and wrote a cheque for the amount, which brought tears of gratitude into his wife's eyes, for had not Grumphry done this for her relations?

On the day appointed Mr. and Mrs. T. went to the Zoo and took away the Von Grunters. But before they left indulged the cousins with a walk through the gardens. Naturally, they having been confined to one

spot, had no idea of the vastness of the grounds nor of the various creatures living there.

Joyous and sprightly the two brothers tripped through the lion house, lovingly followed by Mr. and Mrs. Trotter.

Secret as the affair was supposed to have been kept, it had yet leaked out, and become known to many of the animals. The lions and leopards and tigers knew about it, and they were very excited and half indignant that favour should have been shown to others, and these others pigs! The lioness calmed the lion's feelings by whispering that pigs were of no account, only grand and beautiful creatures like themselves were worth keeping. The



lion gravely growled, "There might be some truth in this."

The supposed Von Grunters had never seen anything as fine as the Trotters' house at Campden Hill, but, with sagacity, kept this to themselves. It was late when they arrived, and they were shown by Mrs. Trotter to their room, which they preferred sharing together rather than to have two separate ones. The excitement and fatigue of the day made them drowsy, and they were soon asleep. Nor had the Grunters ever been used to polite society, as Mrs. Trotter fondly imagined; so next morning, when they sat down to their breakfast, they gave way to their natural vulgarity. Timothy leaned his elbows on the table and dipped

his hands into the bacon, whilst Tobias, seeing a tempting morsel on Mr. Trotter's plate, stuck his fork into it and devoured it.

Mr. and Mrs. Trotter exchanged looks of grief and amazement. Inwardly they set it down to the Von Trotters' long absence from polite society, and hoped that in a few days they would take notice of how the Trotters behaved, and would then eat like Christians, and leave off the dreadful loud breathing that now and then burst into a snort.

"We always take a fork, Timothy, to carry the bacon to our mouths; we break our bread and sip our coffee, so," said Mrs. Trotter.

“Well, we don’t,” said Timothy, “and I think at our age we have a right to our own ways and opinions.”

“No you haven’t, if they are neither pleasant nor cleanly,” rejoined Mr. Trotter. “I must beg that you will try and behave as other people do in polite society. But there, we make every allowance for you having been so long out of the world.”

“Tim,” said Toby; “did you think we were going to have another keeper when we left the Zoo?”

Mr. Trotter leant back in dumb astonishment, and Mrs. Trotter gasped, and made a few choking sounds; but the cousins were not a whit put out, and Timothy went on drinking in gulps and rolling his tongue

round his lips, whilst Tobias laughed and pushed into his greasy mouth a whole roll.

It was too much for the Trotters. They rose and left the room.

“Ha! ha! ha!” roared Tobias, “we’ll let them know that we’ve wills of our own. Because they’ve taken us from prison do they think we’re not to be happy in our own way; that we are to sit so?”

Here Tobias, I am sorry to say, sat bolt upright and imitated Mr. Trotter, sipping from a cup in dainty fashion, and gently wiping his mouth with a table-napkin, as he had seen Mr. Trotter do. This so tickled Timothy’s fancy that he rushed round the room on all fours, and finally chased his

brother, with loud squeakings, upstairs into the drawing-room.

Now the drawing-room was the pride of Mrs. Trotter's heart, with its art furniture, its curtains and cushions of Japanese and Indian work and colours. It had, too, been newly painted and decorated, and day by day Mrs. Trotter was wont to look round and see where some fresh bit of prettiness could be put. Into this bower of beauty the reckless impostors, with a trotting scuffling, violently leapt.

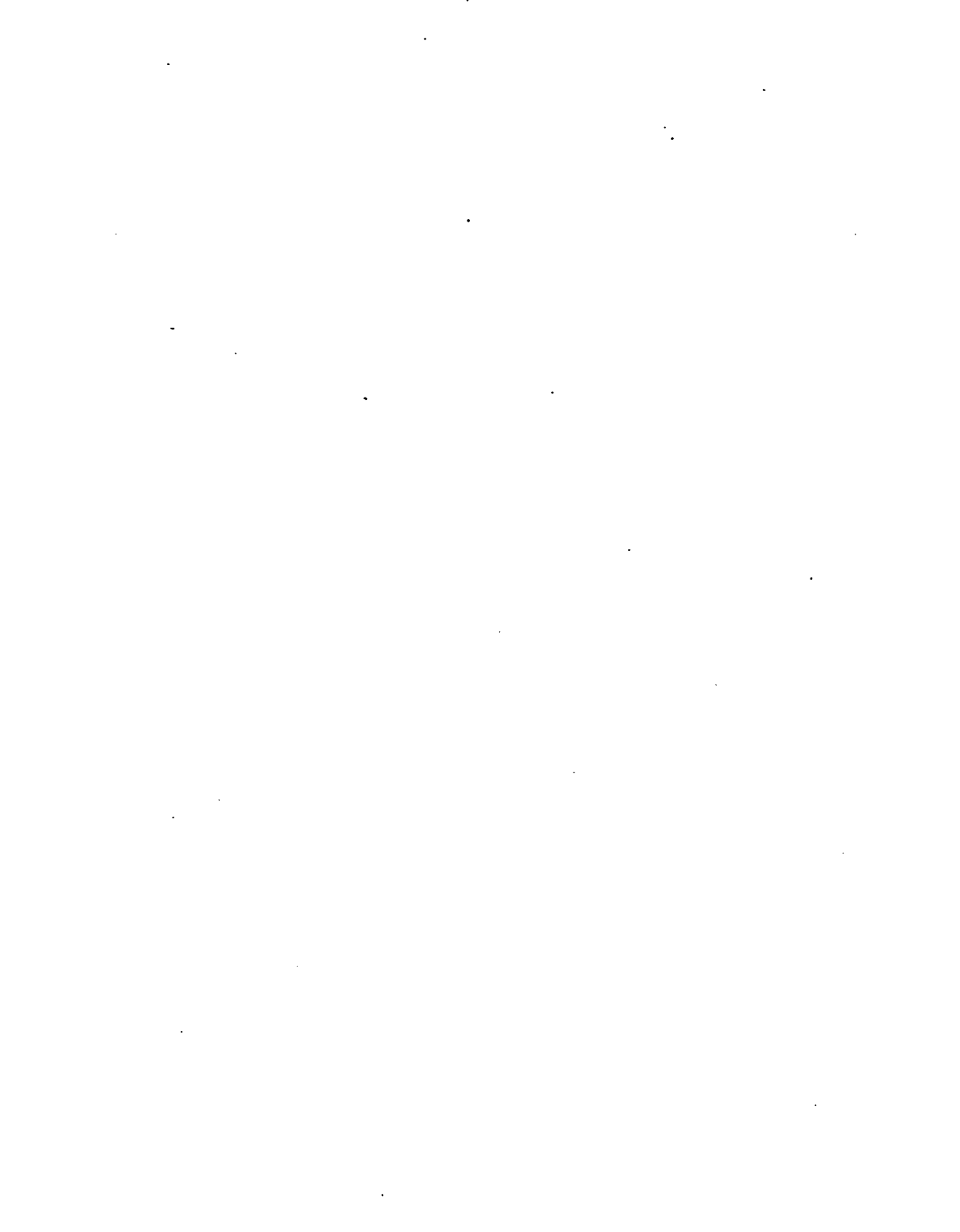
"It's too hot for this coat; my braces are brand new, and are just as fine as the red cross Mrs. Trotter has worked on that satin cushion. Why shouldn't I show them? I'll light a pipe, Tim, and we'll look out at

this side-window and see the people pass by, and have a word with them to amuse ourselves, for this is a dull place and no mistake."

So tucking up his shirt-sleeves Tobias leant out of the window, puffing away at his pipe, whilst his younger brother, who was much shorter, by help of a velvet ottoman, clambered up to the window-sill, unheeding of the scratches he was denting into the new paint, and hanging over, called to the passers by, making loud and droll remarks upon them.

Occupied as they were, they had failed to hear the drawing-room opened, through which Mr. and Mrs. Trotter slowly advanced, amazed and horrified at the appearance of





Mrs. Trotter's young relations. The new and shining paint deeply scratched by Timothy's cleaving grip, the velvet ottoman, embroidered in gold thread, taken for a mounting-step to the window-sill, the lighted pipe, whose curling smoke scented Mrs. Trotter's pet room, where, hitherto, only the sweet odours of flowers had prevailed, Tobias in his shirt-sleeves and cross braces, exposed to the view of every one who passed the house by the side-street. This was the picture that met the Trotters' eyes. It was too much. Shame kept her silent, for were not these ill-behaved creatures her relations! She sank upon the sofa, and, but for Mr. Trotter's comforting support, would have fallen to the ground.

“Toss a cabbage up,” Timothy was heard to say to the greengrocer’s boy below.

“Don’t you risk it,” said Tobias. “Tim will eat it cooked or raw after such a poor morsel or two of breakfast as we had. I shouldn’t be surprised if he ate you too if he can get down to you.”

Here a shrill squeak of fright was heard from below, and Mr. Trotter exclaimed, “Leave the room!”

With the coolest unconcern the Von Grunters turned round and said, “Why, sir.”

“Why?” said Mr. Trotter? “Can you ask? You have no manners; you spoil our room; you pollute the air with your nasty

tobacco; you insult the people who pass by. What will every one say? My wife's relations, I had always heard, were noted for their gentleness, their kindly consideration for others. How comes it that you are so changed?"

Here Tobias nudged his brother, and whispered, "Now, who could have invented such clever stories about us?"

"Suppose," said Mr. Trotter, "that you retire to your room and think upon what you have done. Solitude and fasting may bring repentance and better feelings."

"Solitude and fasting will bring hunger. Repentance—well, I don't remember I ever felt it, but a new sensation will be worth having. Come along, Toby. Show

your teeth prettily. Good-bye. Good-bye."

And with elaborate mocking bows the brothers went out, banging the door and yelling up the stairs.

"I wish," sobbed Mrs. Trotter, "I wish I had never set eyes upon those wicked creatures."

"Patience, Dinah; they are excited with their new liberty; when the newness wears off they will be better. Don't think about them. Let us go for a walk; but first we'll put the room to rights."

The ottoman was lifted up and carefully looked over. Alas! there was a dirty foot-mark that tarnished the gold thread. The scratches on the paint were almost worse.

Mrs. Trotter dipped her handkerchief into the water of a flower-vase and dabbed the scratches, trying to make believe she didn't see them, though all the while she knew in her heart they showed. At last Mr. Trotter led her away from the room, wisely thinking that a little fresh air and outdoor scenes would calm his and his dear wife's justly injured feelings.

It was one o'clock. The luncheon bell rang, and no cousins appeared. "Tell the Mr. Von Grunters," said Mrs. Trotter to the servant, "that we are waiting for them."

The servant went upstairs and returned with a smile on his face. "If you please, sir, the gentlemen can't come down, they say, because they've lost some things—and you

wouldn't like them to come down without them?"

"I daresay Tobias has mislaid his coat," observed Mrs. Trotter. "He must have left it in the drawing-room, and he fears to show himself without it. You see, dear, they are good at heart."

"Mr. Tobias has his coat, ma'am," said the servant. "I was to tell you, if you asked, ma'am, that it was his manners he couldn't find."

"Insolent young man!" said Mr. Trotter, "what next?"

"A note, sir, from Mr. Timothy," said the servant, taking his master's words literally.

Mr. Trotter took the note, a very dirty one, written on the flyleaf of some book

Timothy had found in the bedroom. It ran thus:—

“Dear Cousins,

“As we have not yet thoroughly forgiven your behaviour to us this morning, we cannot honestly sit down with you at table, so send us up something nice, and lots of it, and perhaps, there’s no knowing, we may feel more kindly towards you and Cousin Dinah by-and-by, and join you at dinner-time.”

Almost choking with rage the hitherto gentle Mr. Trotter turned to the servant. “Tell the two—— the young gentlemen, that I will not send them a single crumb.”

The tears were streaming down the cheeks and nose, a rather long one, of Mrs. Trotter

as she read the note which her husband had thrown across to her. The luncheon was spoilt for her, but for Mr. Trotter's sake she dried her eyes and encouraged him to eat.

Dinner-time came but no Von Grunters. Mr. Trotter believed that hunger would subdue them, but little he knew their nature. For whilst Mr. and Mrs. Trotter were out for their afternoon walk, and the servants chatting over their tea, the brothers had quietly gone downstairs to the basement, slipped into the larder and had there eaten up a delicious hare pie, and to make sure that they should not be found out had enticed and shut up Mrs. Puffles, the cat, in the larder, that it might be thought she was the thief.

Mrs. Trotter determined to carry out her punishment, but that the brothers should not be absolutely hungry, some bread and butter and water were sent up to them. Word was brought that the Von Grunters were asleep, and Mrs. Trotter's heart began to melt at the thought that they were hungry and tired out. But when dinner-time came and the cook sent a message that only the remnants of the hare pie were in the larder, it dawned upon Mrs. Trotter's mind that the Von Grunters slept, not because of hunger, but because of a hearty meal.

Sad and sorrowing and full of anxiety for the morrow, the two old people went to bed. They had just got into a peaceful sleep when they were awakened by a heavy thud and a

rush, a sound of scuffling feet overhead, and then another thud.

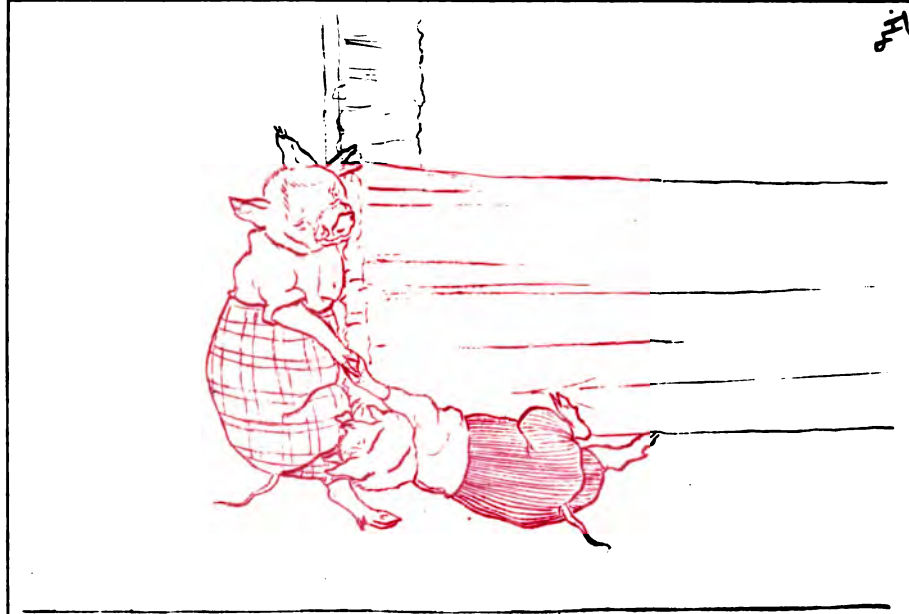
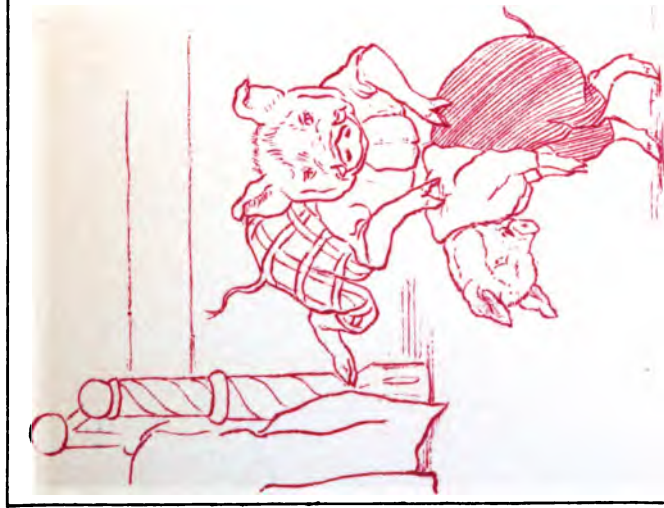
It was just at this time that the Von Grunters awoke from their long sleep, lively and refreshed, eager for diversion and mischief. The light streamed into their room from the opposite gas lamp, so it was bright enough for them to see fairly well. "Let us have a bolster game," said Tobias.

No sooner said than done. The bolster was raised and swung up in his arms and aimed with all Toby's force at little Tim, who ducked to avoid it. Round and round the room and over the beds was Timothy chased and banged, till he contrived to seize a pillow and return the charge.

"I'm tired of this," said Tim, who was



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Tobias and Timothy playing Leap-frog.
p. 41.

Tobias helping Timothy to get a-top of the Bedstead
p. 42.

getting the worst of it. "What do you say to a game at leap-frog?"

"Hurrah!" screeched Toby; "lend a back—one, two, three," and over he vaulted. Then Toby ducked in turn and over sprang Timothy.

Thud, thud, was heard by the unfortunate Trotters below, sitting up in bed in fear and trembling. "Do you think it is thieves?" gasped Mrs. Trotter.

"It hardly can be, Dinah; there is too much noise for burglars. But this is not to be endured. I'll strike a light and go and see. Stay where you are, Dinah."

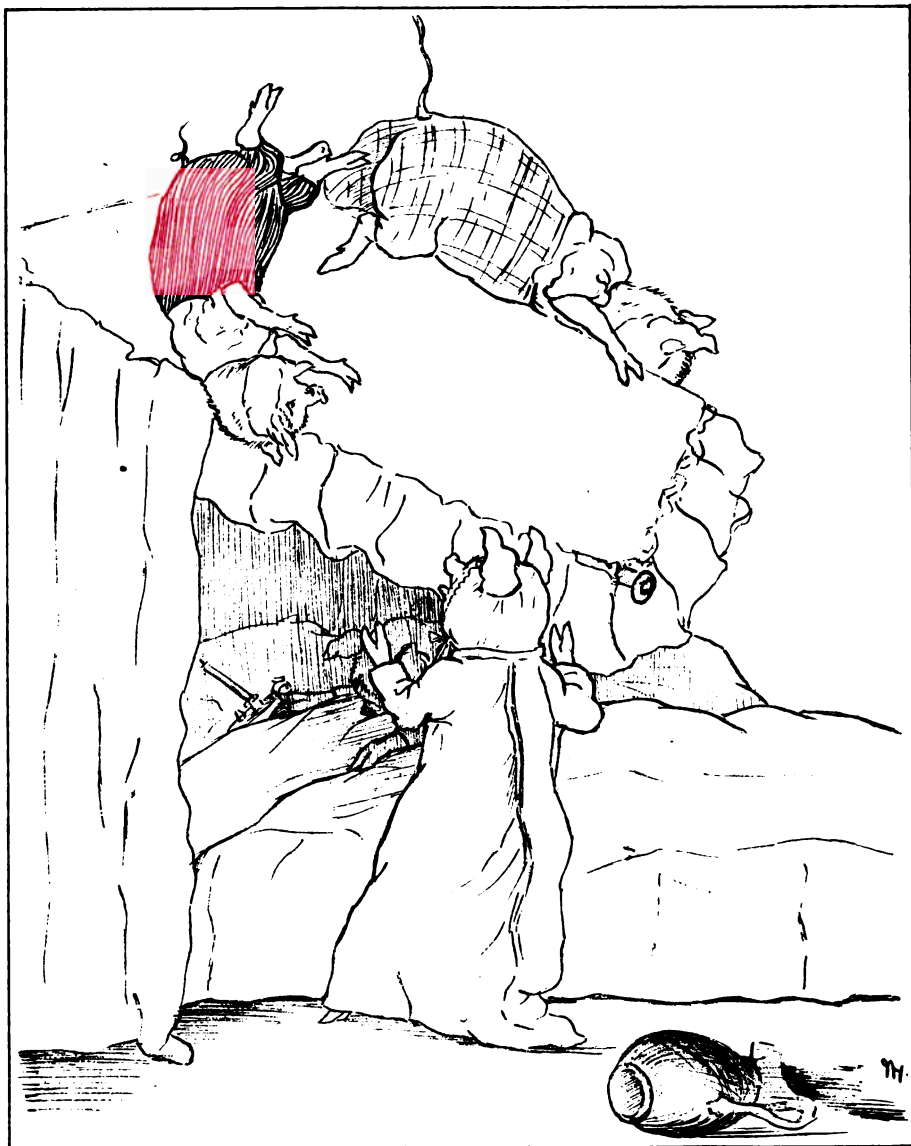
"Indeed, I cannot stay here alone. I must come too, but pray take a poker in case it's thieves."

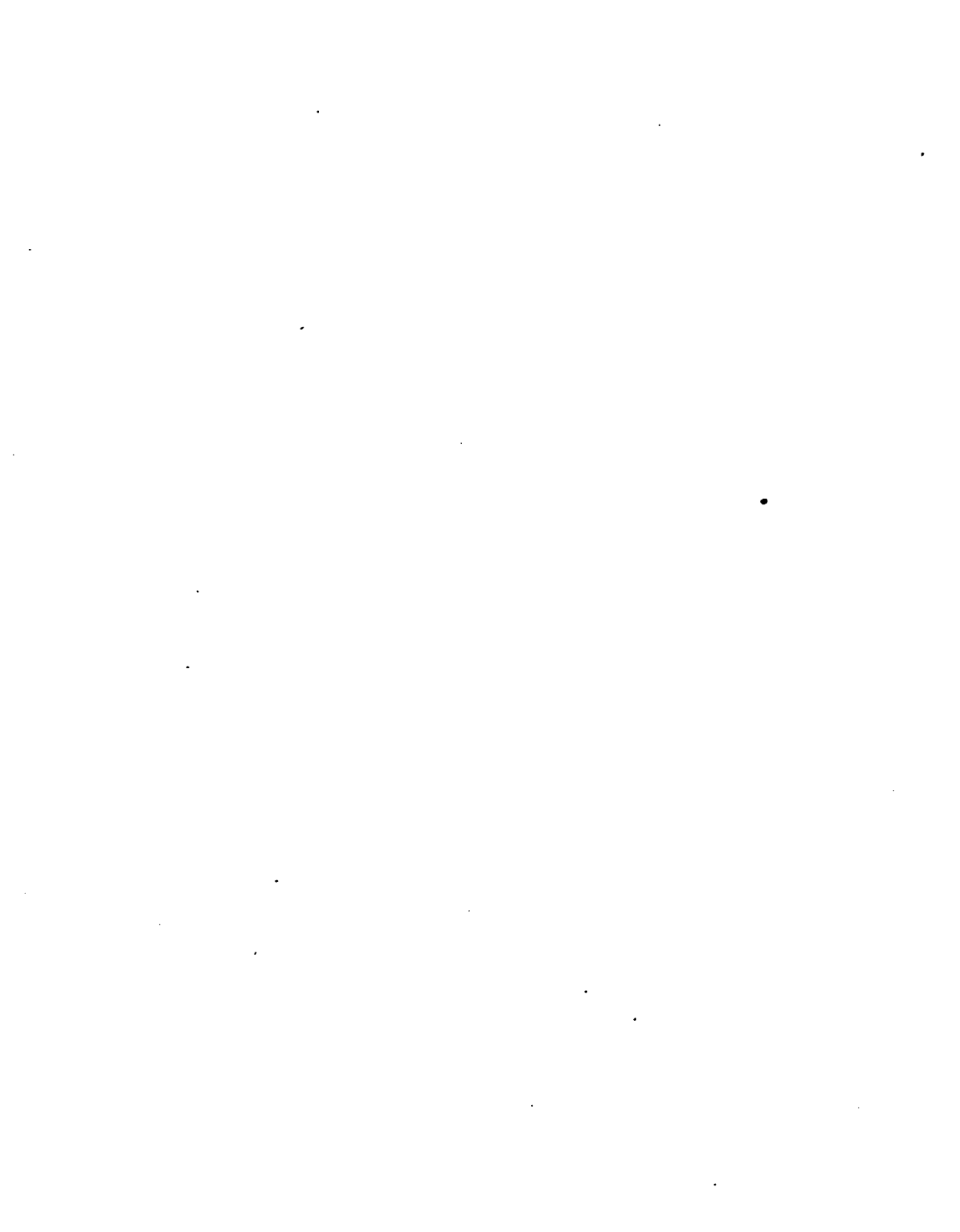
Creeping up softly, with beating hearts, they gently opened the door of the room above them. The scuffling had ceased. Only a rustling was heard, and short, quick breathing. By the light from the street lamp Mrs. Trotter perceived the water jug upset, and her feet soon felt the cold water spilt upon the floor. She was just daintily holding up the skirts of her white dressing gown, whilst Mr. Trotter had drawn aside the bed curtains to see if any one was in the bed, when, with a mighty crash, down toppled the head of the bedstead, and with it fell headlong Tobias and Timothy, who, on hearing Mrs. Trotter's bedroom door open, had, by means of the drawers, leaped to the top of the Arabian bedstead, fully believing



14.







that they would escape being seen. The cries and screams of the party woke up the household, who came rushing up with lights and armed with pokers and brooms.

This escapade was almost more than the patient and kindly Trotters could bear. They began to despair of ever reclaiming the wild and ungrateful youths, and to wish they had never taken them from their home in the "Zoo."

Timothy and Tobias were always in some fresh mischief, so much so that Mr. and Mrs. Trotter left them at home as little as possible, and often took them out with them for a walk when they would gladly have been without their company. The walks gave them no enjoyment.

Tobias stoutly refused to wear his coat on warm days, but he was just a trifle better behaved than his brother, and therefore Mrs. Trotter took his arm, whilst her husband gave a hand to Timothy, who usually dragged along holding it with his two, and yelling now and then like a thorough street boy. The walk was carefully arranged beforehand, to be taken along the streets unlikely to be frequented by the Trotters' friends, so that their shame and distress might be kept to themselves. Glad enough they were when they got home again if nothing very terrible had been perpetrated by their cousins.

It was now lovely summer weather. The walks could be dispensed with, for the Von Grunters could amuse themselves in the garden.





One morning after breakfast, Mr. and Mrs. Trotter having gone into town upon business, the brothers, to pass the time, went to the kitchen and fetched all the cats; one an old tabby, another not quite a year old, and the third a kitten, a nice fluffy, playful little creature.

“Let’s go to the garden, Tim,” said Tobias, “and oh! what fun it would be if we took out the three pussies and planted them in flower-pots! Wouldn’t they look droll, and what a sweet surprise for Mrs. Trotter! Oh dear! I shall die with laughter—come along.”

The cats were shut up in the dining-room that they might be handy when wanted, whilst the brothers went out into the little

bit of garden, and having chosen three empty flower-pots proportionate to the size of the cats, the wicked creatures returned to the house and brought out the poor animals. Mrs. Puffles was cheerfully talked to and stroked till her tail stood upright with satisfaction. When the biggest flower-pot was clapped down upon her, one claw was seen poking through the hole at the top of the pot, and a bit of her tail peeped out at the bottom, which Fluff mistook for a merry device of his mother's, and ran up to play with it, till the loud and angry mews within frightened him away.

“I have got Smut in, make haste, Timothy, and bring some earth. We'll soon give you a nice warm bed, my pretty puss, and who



knows—perhaps you may grow up into a flower, heart's-ease, or cat's-eyes—that would be more like yourself, my cat.”

Spadeful by spadeful the pot was filled up by Timothy, and when Smut was fixed Mrs. Puffles was seized and bedded in the same unhandsome manner, and lastly little Kit.

“And now that we've potted our pretty plants we must make them grow, mustn't we, Tim? or all our labour will have been wasted. Now for the watering-pot; a gentle rain, my dears, will make you grow. What, not like it? Not want to

‘Grow into roses and lilies,
Or nice yellow daffydown dillies!
I think you're a parcel of sillies!
Not want to grow into a flower,
And be picked, and then die in an hour!’

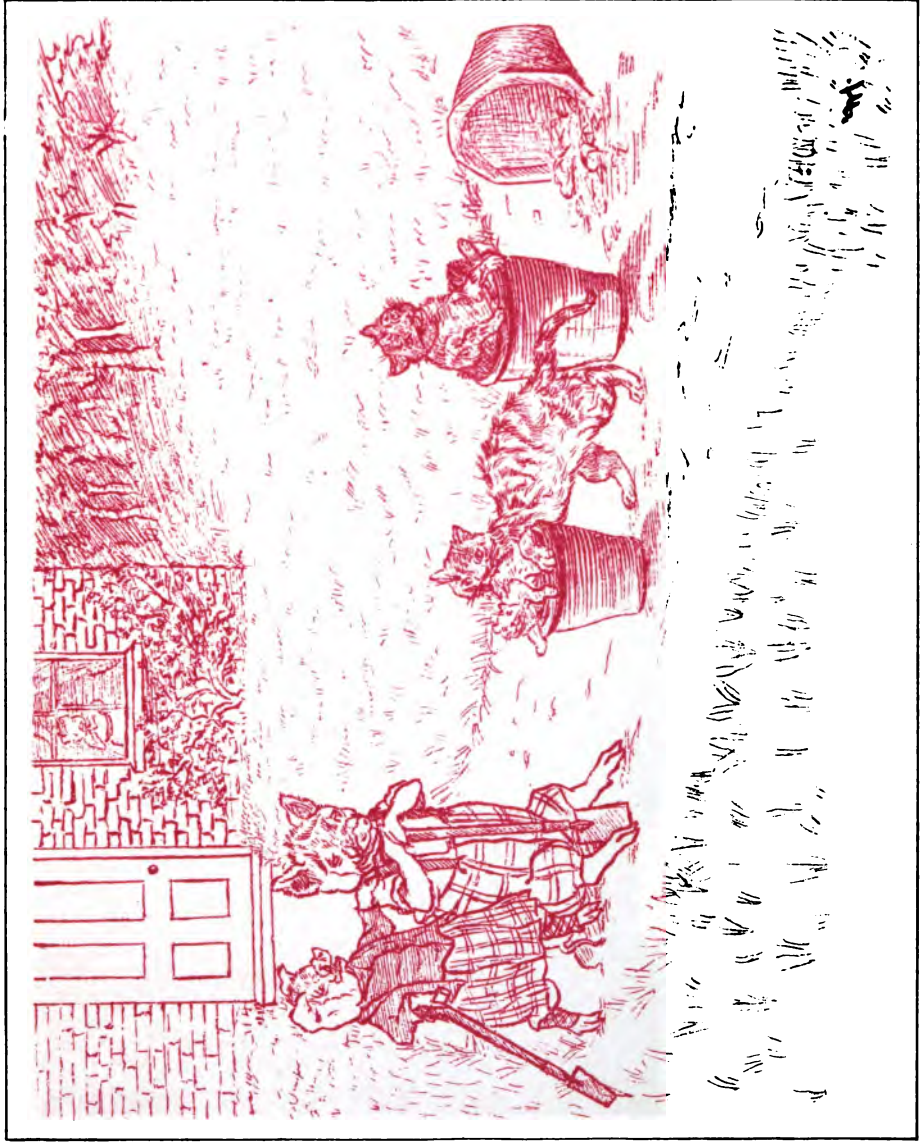
Dear, dear, what ungrateful animals cats are!"

Whilst this wretched mischief was going on Mrs. Trotter, who had returned home, appeared at a window and saw with horror the capture and imprisonment of her beloved tabbies. She tried to get out by the back-door but the cousins, for fear of being disturbed in their pranks, had locked it on the outside and carried off the key. . What with the noise the cats made and their own intentness on potting them, the brothers had neither seen Mrs. Trotter nor heard her cries.

Mrs. Puffles, by a persistent resistance to one side, had upset her special flower-pot and in a minute or two had freed herself







from the earth and rushed up to Fluff. Seizing him by his loose coat she lifted him out of his bed, whilst Smut, imitating Mrs. Puffles, also accomplished his release.

Tobias and Timothy, content with having made the cats feel uncomfortable enough for one day, looked on. Timothy, struck with admiration at Mrs. Puffle's clever escape, cheered her wildly. Tobias, meanwhile, like a labourer satisfied with his day's work and fairly tired, rested on his spade and mused. Who can tell what his musings were? I fear that he only thought of fresh mischief for a fresh day.

When Mr. Trotter returned home he and Mrs. Trotter had a long confabulation, and agreed that should the Von Grunters con-

tinue to behave as they were now doing something must be done; something, but what? That was the question.

Now before Mr. and Mrs. Trotter had brought home the cousins they had gathered about them a very pleasant and select society. Amongst them were the Bishop of Tithe-lands and his wife, excellent people whom the Trotters both loved and respected.

It happened that one day after the Bishop had been making a call upon Mr. and Mrs. Trotter, Tobias and Timothy were seized with one of their maddest and most mischievous moods. A number of troops had just marched past the house. Tobias and Timothy, inspired by the sight of them and the martial music, bethought themselves of



playing at soldiers. So out of the house they rushed, wild with the sense of liberty and spirit of mischief.

Just outside the steps the milkman had left two large empty milk-cans.

“Pick that up, Tim, and put it on for a bear skin. I will take this for the drum,” said Tobias. And he danced and sang—

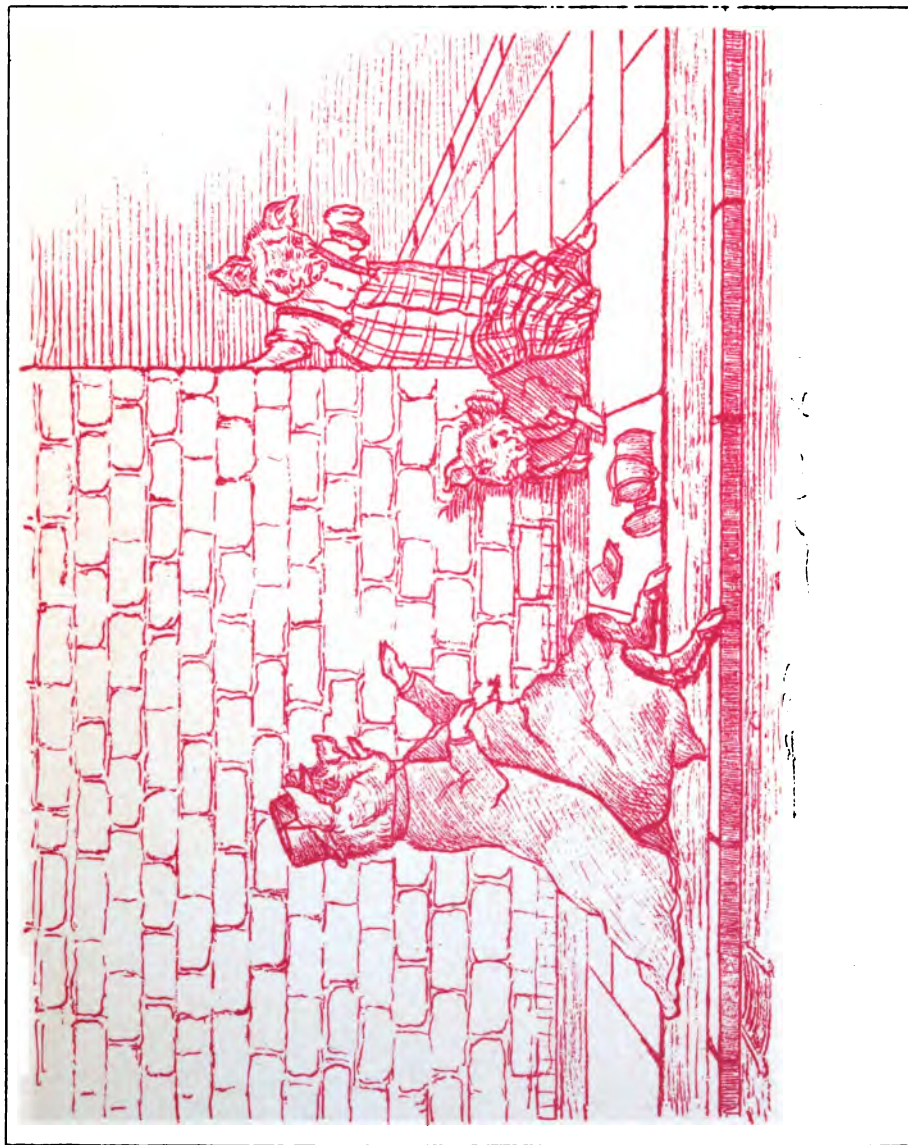
“Ho ! the enemy is coming,
I will scare him with my drumming ;
I should dearly like the strife
If I didn't lose my life.
Tom, tom, tom.
What will Mrs. Trotter say,
Should she chance to come this way ?
Tom, tom, tom.”

Plunging his head into the milk-can and pretending it was a shako, off rushed Timothy pell-mell round the corner, knocked up

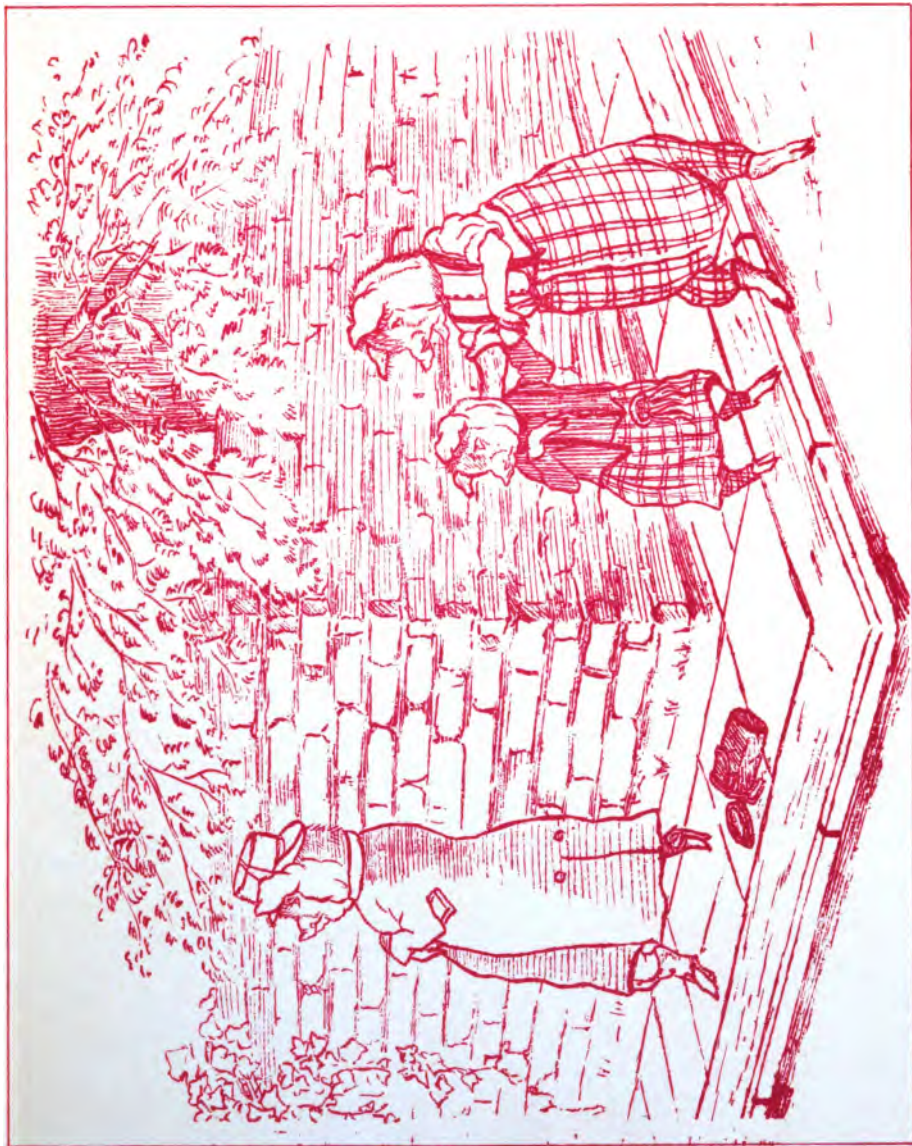
against a substantial body, fell to the ground, and discovered, to his surprise and consternation, his cousin's friend, the Bishop, whom he had overthrown, seated on the ground in front of him.

The Bishop was first amazed, then wrathful, and rising slowly was about to pour out a torrent of angry words, but happily for his dignity restrained himself, as the thought occurred to him that it was of no use throwing pearls before swine. For all that, he determined to speak to the Trotters, and with the more authority on account of a certain letter just received which he carried in his pocket.

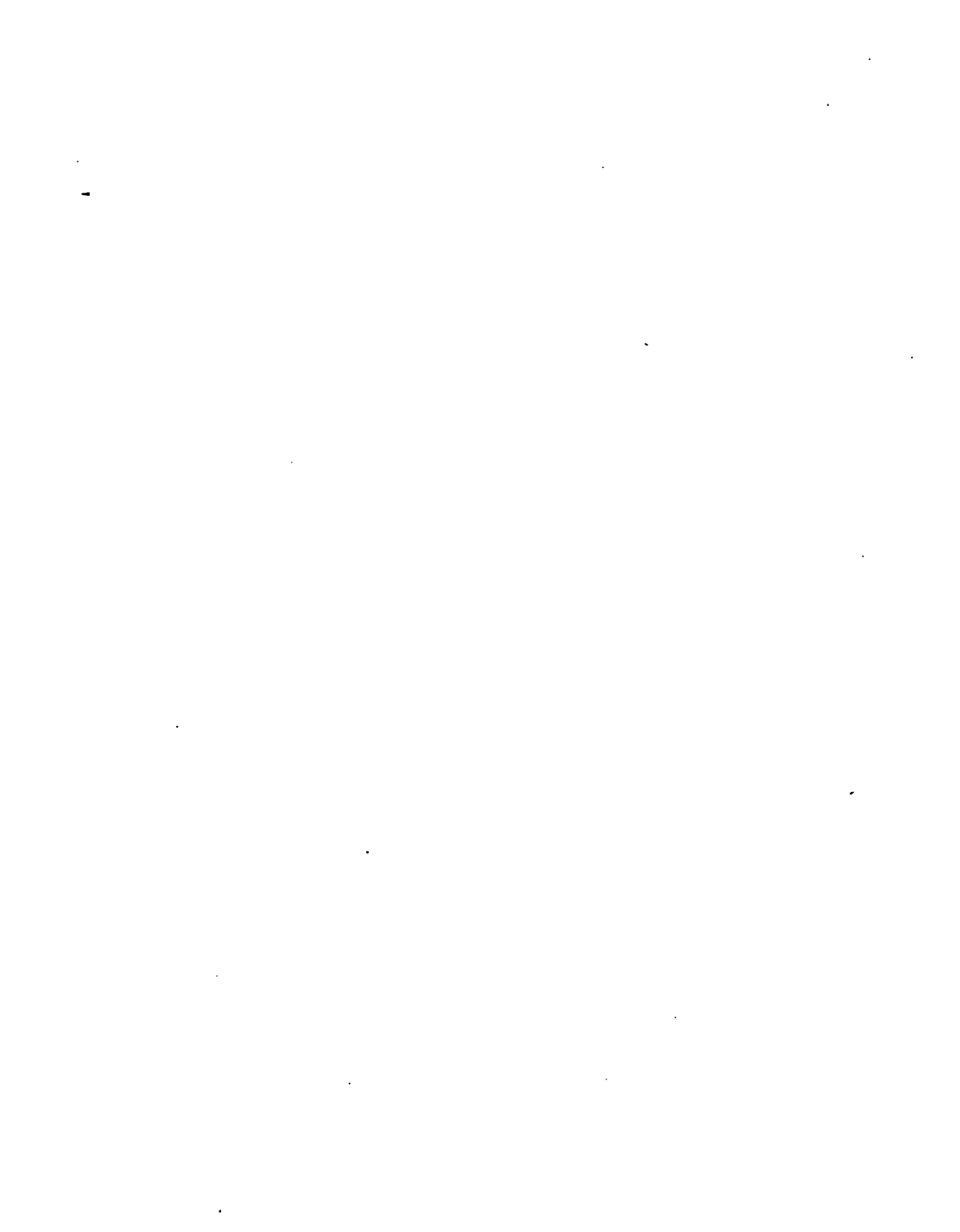
Retreating ruefully the two brothers crept home, and finding their cousins just dressed



Timothy runs against the Bishop and seats him on the Ground. p. 52,



The Bishop walks away : the Von Grunters are frightened. p. 52.







ready for a walk proposed going with them. They had hardly gone far when Tobias was seized with a longing for climbing the lamp-post, which he proceeded to gratify.

“Look, cousin !” said Timothy, “isn’t Toby clever? he’ll be at the top before ever the policeman can catch him.”

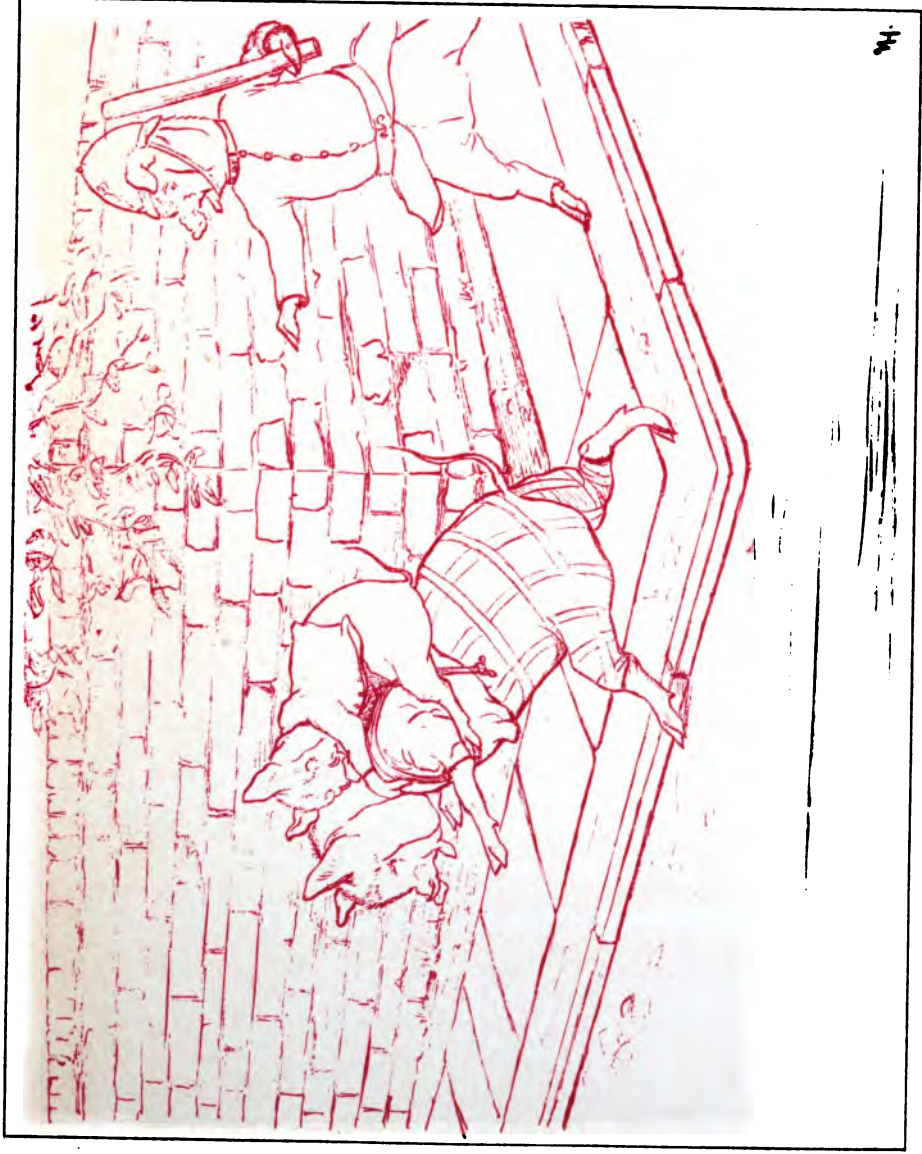
In silence and shame the Trotters hurried on, pretending that Tobias didn’t belong to them, till a shout of rage from the policeman made them look round, and they beheld Tobias in the act of descending the lamp-post kicking out at the policeman, whom he had succeeded in seating on the ground.

“How dare you?” exclaimed Mr. Trotter as he advanced to seize Tobias, “how dare you behave so?”

“I, sir?” said Toby; “because I saw by the way the policeman put his hand to his face that he had the toothache, and I wished to do him a kindness and extract his tooth for him without charge, and if I haven’t succeeded I’m sure I can only beg his pardon and hope to do better another time. I can’t speak more fairly than that.”

Rage was too feeble a word to express Mr. Trotter’s feelings. Seeing this the Von Grunters took flight, and Tobias put Timothy on his back and ran off home as fast as he could, leaving Mr. Trotter to pay the policeman handsomely for the tooth that might have been—but was not—knocked out.

“This is the beginning of the end, my





dear," said Mr. Trotter to his wife. "We must send the Von Grunters back to the home from whence we took them. If only they had not been your cousins, Dinah—"

"The way in which they have changed," replied Mrs. Trotter, "is beyond all things amazing. As I have often told you, my mother used always to speak of their gentle manners, holding them up as an example too sweet to be perfectly imitated."

"Suppose they are not the Von Grunters after all, Dinah?"

"Impossible. I only wish they weren't."

"The Bishop of Tithelands is waiting to see you," said the servant as he opened the door to the Trotters.

"To see me? It must be something

important to make him wait for us. Come, Dinah, let us go straight to him."

"Ah, my dear friends," said the Bishop, rising, "I have come upon a difficult and delicate matter, but you will believe me that it is no personal feeling that prompts me, but solely your comfort and happiness." And hereupon the Bishop began to tell how he had been knocked down by Timothy only two hours ago.

"Indeed," said Mr. Trotter, "we are greatly grieved at this news, and have now suffered so long from the rude conduct of the Von Grunters that we are resolved to send them back to the home from whence we took them. The only thing which makes this difficult is the fact that they are my wife's relations."



“Ah, yes, indeed,” sighed Mrs. Trotter.

“My good lady,” said the Bishop, “I can relieve your mind. By a wonderful chance I can prove you are mistaken. You and Mr. Trotter, moved by compassion, and believing from the great likeness of these young rascals to the photographs of the Von Grunters—which your mother gave you—that they were your cousins, took the supposed relations home, fed, clothed, and protected them. But they are not Mrs. Trotter’s cousins, and this is the proof.

“Here is a letter that I have this morning received from my brother-in-law in South Africa. Let me read it to you.

“My dear Tithelands,

“‘You are quite welcome to the’—oh, that’s not it; oh, here’s the part—‘My ostrich

farm is flourishing; the yield of feathers last year was better than any preceding one, and I believe I owe it entirely to the good management of my new overseer and his brother, Tobias and Timothy Von Grunter. They are full of energy, painstaking, unselfish, and have the most charming manners you can imagine. Altogether I am most fortunate in having two such helpers. They are cousins of the Trotters of Deepdale.'

"Now, my dear friends," continued the Bishop, "does not that settle your doubts, and are not your hearts glad? I don't think there will be any difficulty in getting the so-called Von Grunters taken back by their former owners since they are exceptional

young pigs. And now that I have restored peace to your anxious minds I shall wish you good morning."

"Oh, my dear Grumph!" said Mrs. Trotter when the Bishop had left the room, "I am so happy that those creatures are not my cousins. But we must again write to the Zoological Society, and that at once. This time we'll write to the Bishop and get him to lay the case before the Council."

The letter was written—an answer was received to the effect that as the so-called Von Grunters represented an extraordinary variety of their kind the Society would take them back—adding, that this time, it must be once for all.

"With all my heart," responded Mr.

Trotter, as he read the reply with a mind once more at ease. "Nothing would induce me to oppose the Society's wishes. This very day the impostors shall be restored to the place best fitted for them to dwell in."

So a cab was fetched and, in charge of the very policeman whom Tobias had assaulted, the false Von Grunters were taken back to the Zoo.

It came to Mr. Trotter's knowledge some time afterwards, that the brothers having become very violent in their behaviour, the Society had sent them to Mr. Barnum, the American, who bought Jumbo the elephant. From that time nothing more was heard of them.

Mr. Trotter burnt most of the photo-



graphs in his wife's album, lest she should see some fancied likeness between them and strangers; and he advises all his friends with young families to bring them up carefully and firmly, and to remember the good old proverb—

Spare the twig
And spoil the pig,

“for fear,” as he adds, “they should turn out like my wife's relations.”

THE END.



